

724-01: INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

01-01 Purpose of the Plan

The primary purpose of this plan is to coordinate state, federal and local agencies with responsibilities for water resource management during a drought. The plan enables the state to anticipate drought conditions, to respond early and to coordinate efforts to effectively manage water resources. The plan establishes data gathering, communication, and response actions. Primary responsibility for coordination of the drought management process and plan implementation lies with the Water Resources Board as advised by a Drought Management Steering Committee. The plan also provides a framework for coordinating the statewide response to drought with the authorities and actions of regional and local water supply systems and municipal governments.

01-02 Context for Drought Planning

In July 1998, the 105th Congress enacted *United States Public Law 105-199, The National Drought Policy Act*. This act established an advisory commission charged with creating a national drought policy. The resulting report of the commission recommended preparedness over crisis management, systematic versus *ad hoc* responses, and mitigation strategies for drought management. The relevant goals of this national report for this Rhode Island plan are:

- To incorporate planning, implementation of plans and proactive mitigation measures, risk management, resource stewardship, environmental considerations, and public education as the key elements of an effective national drought policy.
- To improve collaboration among scientists and resource managers to enhance the effectiveness of monitoring, prediction, information delivery and public education as the key elements of effective national drought policy.
- To coordinate drought programs and responses effectively and efficiently.

Rhode Island's Drought Management Plan is intended to respond to the recommendations of the National Advisory Commission's report. It was modeled after the Massachusetts Drought Management Plan.

01-02-01 State Guide Plan Water Supply Management Policies

At the state level, the Rhode Island State Guide Plan is developed by the Department of Administration's Statewide Planning Program pursuant to *Rhode Island General Laws (RIGL) 42-11*. It is a means for centralizing and integrating long-range goals, policies and plans with short-range project plans and implementing programs prepared on a decentralized basis by the agency or agencies responsible in each functional area. In addition to this drought management plan, there are three elements of the Guide Plan that specifically relate to water resource management in the State. These are:

- State Guide Plan Element 721, *Water Supply Policies for Rhode Island, 1997 (Revised)*
- State Guide Plan Element 722, *Water Supply Plan for Rhode Island, 1991*
- State Guide Plan Element 723, *Water Emergency Response Plan for the State of Rhode Island, 1993*

Elements 721 and 722 contain policies regarding supply management, demand management, and planning and administrative management issues of water use. State Guide Plan Element 723 sets forth a response framework for specific water supply shortages and emergency situations and recommends that a separate drought management plan be developed for the state. More details on the existing policies are outlined in Appendix A, State Guide Plan Elements Related to Water Resource Management.

01-02-02 Municipal Comprehensive Planning

The *Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, RIGL 45-22.2* requires all municipal governments to adopt and maintain local comprehensive plans. The comprehensive plans are to be used to direct community land use decisions and capital improvement funding strategies. Under the Act, locally adopted comprehensive plans are reviewed for consistency with the State Guide Plan, and the goals and policies of state agencies. Following adoption of new state guide plan elements, municipalities have one year to make necessary revisions to their local comprehensive plans. Future updates of municipal comprehensive plans will be expected to address drought management in order to be consistent with this State Guide Plan element.

01-02-03 Water Supply System Management Planning

The *Water Supply Systems Management Plan Act, RIGL46-15.3* requires Water Supply Systems Management Plans (WSSMP). All water suppliers that obtain, transport, purchase, or sell more than fifty million gallons of water per year are classified as large water suppliers and must, under the Act, develop a WSSMP. The Rhode Island Water Resources Board establishes the rules and procedures for preparation, review and approval of these plans. These serve as master plans for the water system, addressing adequacy of water supply, water distribution system, conservation measures, watershed protection, capital improvements, and emergency preparedness, including drought. The Water Resources Board, the Department of Health, the Department of Environmental Management, and the Statewide Planning Program review the plans. To receive approval by the Water Resources Board, WSSMPs must be found consistent with State Guide Plan elements, other state laws and regulations, and (the) applicable local comprehensive plan(s).

Water suppliers are required to address drought contingencies and appropriate responses in the emergency operations management section of their WSSMP. In addition, the Regulations of the Water Resources Board require that a WSSMP include an emergency component to assess system risks and response capabilities, and to describe a contingency plan for all foreseeable water supply emergencies. Suppliers are required to identify system risks, including droughts that exceed the water supply system's design capacity. They are also required to identify their response to specific water supply emergencies. Future updates and revisions of WSSMPs will be expected to address drought management in order to be consistent with this State Guide Plan element.